

Better Board Meetings

October 29, 2013



Today's Conversation

- No-fuss **ways to improve** your meetings now
- Consenting to **consent**
- Questions to **get better** over the long haul



Board Meetings are Critical to Success

Ineffective Board meetings lead to the loss of quality Board members, who tire of these issues:

- **Rubber Stamps**: lack of substantive discussion
- **Rose Colored Glasses**: illusions about realities
- **Standing Elephants**: ignoring or avoiding issues
- **Fatigue**: tired of pushing, fighting or treading
- **Misfits**: shifted or unmet expectations



First Things First

Better Board
meetings
are possible

- Better Board meetings **require partnership**
- Better Board meetings **demand preparation**
- Better Board meetings **involve structure**
- Better Board meetings **take discipline**
- Better Board meetings **promote focus**
- Better Board meetings **advance the mission**
- Better Board meetings **keep people engaged**
- Better Board meetings **improve impact**



Better Board meetings require partnership

No Fuss #1

Use Strategic
Introductions
at every
meeting

- Commit yourself to **being part of the solution**
 - Do your own assessment of the meeting flow & feel
 - Identify one thing that might be easy yet turn the tide
- Spark conversations about the benefit of better Board meetings with those who run them
 - Talk with the Executive Director
 - Rally the Board President and other leaders
 - Share this information and the resources



Better Board meetings demand preparation

No Fuss #2

Send out
information
more than
2 days
in advance

- You schedule your meetings ...
so, **start scheduling the information**
 - Board Agenda & Supporting Docs 2 wks prior
 - Reminder of Meeting & Actions 2 days prior
 - Board Summary for non-attendees 5 days after
 - Minutes for all 2 wks after



Better Board meetings involve structure

No Fuss #3

Start on time,
keep time and
honor time

- Build in time to foster relationship building
- Infuse a more business-driven structure when planning the topics and agenda order
 - Of what do people need to know regarding our impact and responsibility?
 - In what areas is input helpful or necessary in order to advance the business of the organization?
 - On what issues is approval needed to ensure progress and accountability?



Better Board meetings take discipline

No Fuss #4

Assign a process observer

- Foster a culture where meetings are taken seriously and people arrive five minutes early
- Assign and respect roles to keep the meeting moving forward and on focus
 - Facilitator, timekeeper, recorder & process observer
- Structure the agenda, know the intentions and create a pathway for progress



Consent to Consent

- the what & why of a consent agenda -

What

- One action item to cover a bundle
- Sanctioned under Robert's Rules of Order
- Implies general agreement on procedure

“control the future; don't reconsider the past”

Why

- Saves time and minimizes distraction
- Lends more structure & discipline
- Demands engagement & preparation from members



To Consent or Not To Consent

- Previous meeting minutes
- Updated Board roster
- Committee appointments
- Committee reports
- Financial Statement & Financial Report
- Finance Committee Budget recommendation
- Executive Director's report
- Executive Committee actions between meetings
- Recurring contracts for goods or services
- Correspondence
- Slate of Board nominees

**Which items
should be
included;
which should
stand on
their own?**



To Consent or Not To Consent

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**Red items
are for
consent.**

**Black items
are for
discussion.**

**Orange items
could go
either way.**



Plan Ahead To Move Forward

- how to consent-

1. Chairperson identifies & numbers consent items for sheet in Board packet.
2. Supporting/consent materials are provided with Board packet in advance of the meeting (with sufficient time for materials to be considered).
3. As first order of business, the chairperson asks if any members have any items to remove from the consent agenda/calendar.
4. Any item may be removed for any reason by any board member for any purpose.
5. For removed items, chair has authority to determine if it the item will be discussed immediately or as part of the routine agenda.
6. When there are no items to be removed, the Secretary reads the items and the Chair calls for a vote: "If there is no objection, these items will be adopted." Pausing for objections, the Chair states: "As there are no objections, these items are adopted." {No show of affirmation required}
7. Chair moves the meeting forward.
8. Secretary will report the full text of the resolutions in the minutes.



Transform Your Agenda

- before -

- Call to Order
- Approval of Minutes
- Treasurer's Report
- Committee Reports
 - Executive
 - Membership
 - Fundraising
 - Programs
 - Public Relations
 - Program A
 - Program B
 - Program C
 - Program D
- Old Business
- New Business
- School Updates
- Meeting Adjourned



Transform Your Agenda

- after -

- Call to Order & Intros
- Consent Agenda
 - minutes
 - committee reports
 - financial statements
- Organizational Update
 - Financial Update
- Education Updates
- Strategic Discussions
 - Membership Strategy
 - Program Audit
- Notice of Needed Donations
- Dates of Note
 - Event 2 months out
 - Event 6 months out
- Other Business
- Adjourn

(upcoming Board meetings)

(mission)



Another Example

A. Welcome and Introductions

B. Special Recognition or Announcements (mission moment)

C. Consent Calendar

- Minutes of the previous board meeting
- Minutes of a recent Executive Committee conference call or meeting
- President's Report/Executive Director's Report
- Development Committee Report
- Other Committee Reports as appropriate
- Routine correspondence

D. Major Discussion Items (taken from Strategic Goals)

1. Finance Committee Proposals
2. Governance Committee Proposals for Consideration
 - a. Proposal of New Board Member Orientation Program
 - b. Approve revised Committee Descriptions
 - c. Consider Bylaw revisions
 - d. Consider undertaking a board self-assessment
3. Review and Update of Major Program Strategies
4. New Cooperative Programs /Strategic Alliances

E. "What did we do in today's meeting that helped us advance our mission?"



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Better Board meetings promote focus

- To whom & for what is the organization accountable?
- How do we hold ourselves & each other accountable?
- What is our vision of achievement?
- How have we committed to advancing our mission and enhancing our intended impact?

These answers will serve as the baseline for structuring the meetings and discovering/developing discipline



Better Board meetings advance the mission

- Does the Board have a shared understanding about the purpose and intended impact of the organization?
- What are the organization's strategic priorities spanning the next 3 years in order to advance a longer-term vision?
- How well does each Board member understand the talents & perspectives/he brings to the Board as well as those of fellow Board members?
- What are the major obstacles standing in the way of the organization achieving greater success?

These answers will help shape the arc of your meeting schedule and the content of individual meetings



Better Board meetings keep people engaged

- How would an outside observer classify the Board discussions after presentation of a Committee recommendation?
- What is the average attendance by member and of the Board overall?
- How many people provide comments or ask questions 'of substance' at each meeting?
- How many contacts does a Board member have with the organization outside of the meetings?

These answers will help assess and drive the value and contribution of not only each member but also the Board as an entity working on behalf of the mission



Better Board meetings improve impact

- Are Board members clear on how roles and responsibilities are delineated among Board, staff and volunteers?
- When was the last time the Board celebrated achievement of something it set out to evolve about the organization's operations?
- How many Board members are confident and proactive in talking with people outside of the 'inner circle' about the organization's value?
- How comfortable and competent are Board members in analyzing and discerning implications involving resources (human & financial)?

These answers will uncover opportunities for incorporating educational aspects into the meeting.



Make Your Board Meetings Better

- Use introductions w/ a strategic **'icebreaker'**
- Incorporate a **consent** agenda
- Focus agenda on **strategic** issues (no more than two)
- Spark **participation** from every person
- Look to the **future** for issues & commitments
- Incorporate a **reflection** to advancing mission



Continue the Conversation

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